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Families' guide to the internet

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Families' Guide to the Internet

Families

Is yours one of the hundreds of thousands of families in Canada that has a home computer but isn't connected to the Internet? The Internet can offer rewarding, fun and educational experiences for families. Whether for visiting museums and libraries, communicating with friends and family all over the world, finding interesting facts, playing games or doing homework research, families are finding a multitude of reasons for being connected to the Internet.

Homework help

The Internet is changing the world that our children are growing up in, and it is becoming increasingly important to their education and future job opportunities. SchoolNet (<http://www.schoolnet.ca>) is a federal government initiative that allows students and educators to participate in a range of learning projects through the Internet.

The number of "homework help" sites for children is growing. Whether for an answer to a geography question, an idea for an essay or a picture for a school project, these sites provide children with an almost endless supply of fascinating information.

Just as there are Internet resources that are inappropriate for children, there are also many Internet resources designed specifically for children. Searching the Web for "search engines" and "children" will point you to a number of search tools designed to locate sites that are "child-safe" and particularly useful for children. Such sites have been reviewed by an editor and given a "safe" rating or have been run through a filtering program to screen out undesirable

information. A number of Internet-equipped computers at public libraries have good search tools for children.

There are many excellent informative and educational on-line resources for kids. Think how much more they'll enjoy the Internet if you share the experience with them. And who knows, you might even learn something new!

Keeping the family together — "virtually"

Feeling adventurous? Consider creating a family Web site, where the whole family can participate by contributing news items, announcements, stories of achievement and other information. Show the kids that the fun isn't over when a family vacation ends — the whole family can chronicle the journey on-line by adding photos, diary entries and a narrative. Why not start an Internet family project such as researching the family tree? Post the results of your genealogical research on your Web site.



E-mail is another great way for your family to stay in touch with friends and relatives. Use E-mail to share news, attach digital photographs of the family or even attach sound messages recorded at your own computer.

The family that surfs together...

After dinner, instead of watching TV, why not take your family Web surfing?

There are many Web resources that preschoolers, when accompanied by their parents or older siblings, can enjoy. They can choose pictures to print and colour, play simple games, do puzzles, learn to read and more.



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Is your family thinking of getting a pet? Use the Internet to gather information about your desired breed. Some sites will allow you to input details about your environment and your desires in a pet and give you a list of breeds appropriate to your lifestyle. Articles abound about choosing a pet, bringing it home and looking after it. There are also discussion groups for every pet imaginable, where parents and children can talk to others about pet problems and other issues.

Plan a trip

It can be difficult to please everyone when planning a family trip. Get the whole family involved in planning your next trip on-line. Research possible destinations, find out about the weather, look for family discounts, book entertainment, select hotels, choose your rental car and more. Also look for Internet discussion groups where you can ask others how they enjoyed their vacation at your intended destination, what they would recommend that you bring and what activities the kids might enjoy the most.

Parenting

The Internet is also a great source for information on parenting. Whether you are a new parent, a single parent, a parent of teenagers, a parent of a sick or disabled child or a recently divorced parent, you will find Web sites devoted to issues that concern you and your family. There are numerous parenting discussion groups, where you can share knowledge, find and give support and make new friends.

Protecting your family on-line

Many Canadians are concerned about the safety of their family on-line. It is true that some aspects of the Internet are inappropriate and unsafe for children, and it is important that children are supervised when they're on-line. Parental rules about dealing with strangers, watching television or buying magazines also apply on-line.

Be sure to:

- ☛ stay aware of what your children are doing on-line by placing the computer in a family area such as the kitchen or living room
- ☛ closely monitor any relationships that your children develop on-line
- ☛ tell your children never to give personal information on the Internet (such as their full name, address, school, etc.).

Web sites of interest

SchoolNet

<http://www.schoolnet.ca>



Health Canada's Childhood and Youth Web Site

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/childhood-youth/>





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